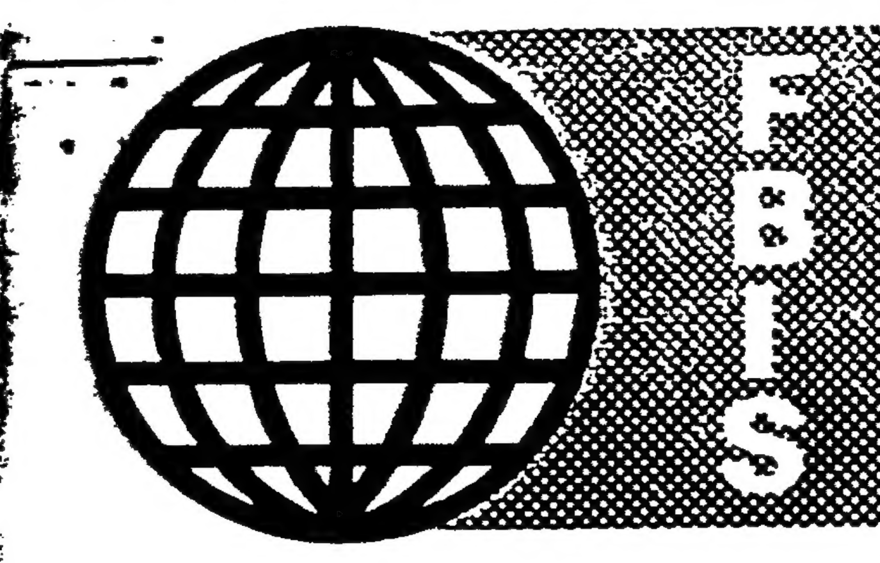


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FOREIGN PRESS NOTE

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USSR: MEDIA REPORT MULTITUDE OF UFO SIGHTINGS

Leading Soviet newspapers and journals have recently begun publishing an increasing number of articles and news reports on sightings of unidentified flying objects (UFOs) in various areas of the Soviet Union. A "permanent center" for the study of UFOs has been established in Moscow to conduct research and support the investigation of reported sightings.

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Setting the tone for this media coverage was an article in the 9 July 1989 SOTSIALISTICHESKAYA INDUSTRIYA, which referred to many recent reports of UFO sightings in the USSR. Interviewed by the paper, P. Prokopenko, director of a laboratory for the study of "anomalous phenomena," stated that a "permanent center" for the study of UFOs is being established in the Soviet Union. In addition to conducting research and presenting lectures on UFOs, the center will support the investigation of reported sightings.

In referring to an issue of the paper published in July 1988 that included a report on "an amazing event that took place on Hill 611 near the village of Dalnegorsk in Primorskiy Kray," the article noted that the event is still under investigation. Many observers saw a flying sphere crash into one of the hill's twin peaks, and physicists and other scientists from the Siberian Division of the USSR Academy of Sciences are still studying the "fine mesh," "small spherical objects," and "pieces of glass" that are considered to be small remnants left behind by the sphere. According to the article, the alleged spacecraft was nearly obliterated in the crash, but there appears to be enough material at the site for the scientists--a mixture of UFO "enthusiasts" and skeptics--to eventually "penetrate this mystery."

In studying the site, scientist A. Makeyev reported finding gold, silver, nickel, alpha-titanium, molybdenum, and compounds of beryllium. One of the "skeptical" physicists from Tomsk has hypothesized that the so-called sphere could have been some kind of a "plasmoid," formed by the "interaction of geophysical force fields," which captured the elements found by Makeyev from the atmosphere on its trajectory toward disintegration on the hilltop. Other researchers have generally rejected this explanation since the amounts of various types of metals found at the site would imply, according to this "plasmoid" theory, that "the concentration of metals in the atmosphere should exceed the present level by a factor of 4,000."

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Some of the scientists have concluded that the object that crashed into Hill 611 was an "extraterrestrial" space vehicle constructed by highly intelligent beings. Doctor of Chemical Sciences V. Vysotskiy stated that "without doubt, this is evidence of a high technology, and it is not anything of a natural or terrestrial origin." He cited the fact that the remnants of fine mesh included bits of thin threads with a diameter of only 17 microns and that these threads, in turn, were composed of even thinner strands twisted into braids. Extremely thin gold wires were discovered intertwined in the finest threads--evidence of an intricate technology beyond the present capabilities of terrestrial science, according to Vysotskiy.

SOTSIALISTICHESKAYA INDUSTRIYA of 25 July 1989 reported that a UFO sighting had been claimed by engineer Yuriy Ponomarenko and a group of workers at a collective farm in the Dnepropetrovsk region. The object was described as a disk with two beams of light emanating from its sides. The witnesses maintained that they had observed the object on the ground for about 20 minutes, and that it emitted no sound when it flew away.

The August 1989 issue of the Soviet journal NAUKA I ZHIZN included a 9-page article which, after summarizing the history of UFO sightings in general, contrasted some of the views of the "skeptics" with some of the opinions of the "enthusiasts" on the numerous reported UFO sightings in the USSR, including incidents in Serpukhov, Petrozavodsk, and Rudnya. According to the "enthusiasts," UFOs have left evidence of their visits on many occasions, including the Serpukhov incident in which, they claim, a UFO left a circular depression in the grass with a diameter of 4 meters. The skeptics maintain that most of this so-called "evidence" can be explained as having no connection with extraterrestrial intelligence. Many of the sightings could be attributed to rocket testing, for example. Academician Vladimir Vasilyevich Migulin, director of the Terrestrial Magnetism, Ionosphere, and Radio Wave Propagation Institute in Troitsk, which has a section for the investigation of anomalous phenomena in the atmosphere, maintains that over 90 percent of UFO sightings can be nullified by such mundane explanations.

STROITELNAYA GAZETA of 16 September 1989 reported that in August a group of observers including physical scientist Elvir Kurchenko began investigating another circular depressed area in a forest near Surgut after a worker claimed that a UFO had visited the site.

SOTSIALISTICHESKAYA INDUSTRIYA of 30 September 1989 noted that media all over the Soviet Union were receiving reports of UFO sightings on the ground and in the air, adding that the paper's editorial office was reviewing hundreds of reports related to UFO incidents. In response to this deluge of reports, the paper interviewed Anatoliy Listratov, chairman of the section of the All-Union Astronomical and Geodesic Society assigned to the study of anomalous phenomena, who said that although his group is "still wandering around in the darkness," some important developments in the investigations had recently occurred. He stated that "at the sites of the landings...the operating frequency of a crystal-controlled oscillator changes. Simply speaking, electronic timepieces run at rates that are either too fast or too slow."

Listratov noted that Soviet military officers and pilots had recently started providing some documentation on UFO sightings. As an example, he stated that he had documentary information regarding an encounter between Soviet aircraft and a UFO over the city of Borisov. The crews of two

Soviet aircraft reported seeing a large flying disk in their vicinity with five beams of light emanating from it: three beams were directed toward the ground and two were projected upward when the object was first sighted. The ground controller instructed one of the planes to alter its course and approach the object, at which point the disk flew to the same level and aimed one of its beams at the approaching Soviet plane, illuminating the cockpit. Listratov cited the pilot's log as stating: "At this time, the copilot was at the controls. He observed the maneuver that the object had just carried out and was able to raise his hand to shield himself from the unbearable light. The aircraft commander was resting in the adjoining seat, and a bright ray of light, projecting a spot with a diameter of 20 centimeters, passed across his body. Both pilots felt heat."

According to Listratov, the aircraft commander and his copilot both became "invalids" shortly after the incident. The copilot was forced to leave his job due to a sudden deterioration in his health, including the onset of sudden prolonged periods of "loss of consciousness." The aircraft commander died within a few months. The cause of death was listed as "cancer," and "injury to the organism as a result of radiation from an unidentified flying object" was listed as a contributing factor on the official medical record in the hospital where the commander died, according to Listratov.

Listratov told SOTSIALISTICHESKAYA INDUSTRIYA that about 95 percent of UFO sightings could be explained, and investigations have often revealed them to be burned-out rocket stages or the remnants of unsuccessful rocket launches. It is the 5 percent that cannot be explained that is causing all the commotion among Soviet scientists and military personnel. Instead of the widespread skepticism that he had expected when he first began to interview military personnel, he noted that officers and soldiers had told him about their own encounters with UFOs, and they had even shown him reports that had been completely filled out on official forms.

KOMSOMOLSKAYA PRAVDA of 7 October reported that the Soviet Union had just opened an official center for the study of UFOs in Moscow. Physicists, geologists, astronomers, and psychologists are teaching courses on the various characteristics of the UFOs that have been reported and the types of equipment necessary to investigate UFO sightings.

On 9 October the Soviet news agency TASS reported that a UFO had landed in a park in the city of Voronezh. TASS reported that the object had been observed by many witnesses before it left.

KOMSOMOLSKAYA PRAVDA of 12 October reported that a group of scientists had visited a field in Perm Oblast to investigate claims that a UFO had landed in that area and had left behind a circular impression measuring 62 meters in diameter.

KRASNAYA ZVEZDA of 13 October suggested that mass hysteria may be an important factor contributing to the recent outburst of widespread claims of encounters with UFOs in the USSR. According to the paper, many elements of the Soviet media were fanning this phenomenon, which it compared to the hysteria resulting from Orson Welles' radio broadcast in 1938 about an invasion of the United States by extraterrestrials.

The 19-25 October issue of POISK carried an article contrasting the viewpoints of scientists from the two main Soviet institutes presently

engaged in investigating UFO reports—the newly established center for UFO studies in the Palace of Culture of Power Engineers in Moscow and the Terrestrial Magnetism, Ionosphere, and Radio Wave Propagation Institute, which has branches in Troitsk, Leningrad, and Irkutsk. Physicist Yuriy Platov of the Terrestrial Magnetism Institute does not believe the claims of scientists who maintain they have found remnants in Dalnegorsk of a UFO constructed by extraterrestrials, and he is convinced that the materials found at that site are really only the remnants of the unsuccessful launch of a Soviet rocket in that region. He believes that many of the other reports of UFOs can be explained by the inability of the observers to recognize the phenomenon known as "ball lightning."

The POISK article contrasted Platov's view with that of another physical scientist, Vladimir Azhazha, who was recently elected chairman of the new All-Union Commission for the Study of Unidentified Flying Objects of the Union of Scientific and Engineering Societies. Azhazha compared reports of a UFO crash in the USSR with a claim by UFO enthusiasts in the United States that a UFO had crashed in the desert near Roswell, New Mexico, in 1947. He believes there is sufficient evidence to support the claims of UFO crashes in both cases--in Dalnegorsk and in Roswell. In the latter case, he cited the testimony of eyewitnesses who maintained that they had seen the bodies of four extraterrestrials lying near the smashed spacecraft. According to Platov, however, the eyewitnesses in the Roswell case were mistaken. He believes that the object that crashed was a USAF experimental rocket with four Rhesus monkeys aboard and that the accident was the result of an unsuccessful launch attempt at the dawn of the space era.

SOTSIALISTICHESKAYA INDUSTRIYA of 21 October noted that hundreds of residents had reported observing a UFO in Omsk and that many of these eyewitnesses had reported the sighting directly to the paper's office in Omsk. The article included a report by an "authoritative" military officer, Maj V. Loginov, who stated: "I must tell you straight off that radar did not detect this object, and so I am reporting visual observations. The object was passing over at an altitude of several kilometers. The visible shining sphere appeared to be about one and a half times as large as the moon's shape in the night sky. Four projectors--some parallel and some at angles to the Earth--were casting very bright beams. The object was in the field of vision for about 5 minutes...hovering...over the civil airport before descending a little. Then the projectors were turned off and a whirling plume trail instantaneously appeared around this shining sphere. The object began to recede rapidly in a direction from the northwest to the east at the same time that flights were being carried out from a neighboring airport. Pilots were able to observe it visually, but they could not detect it on their radar screens.... Radar signals could not be reflected from it. This object was immediately reported up the chain-of-command, and our colleagues in the Altay Kray, in the area toward which the object flew, reported back to us within 5 minutes that they had it under visual observation. That meant that it had covered a distance of approximately 600 kilometers at a speed of about 7,000 kilometers per hour."

According to Loginov, all observations indicated that the object was a UFO being controlled by some kind of intelligence and that it was not merely some kind of anomalous atmospheric phenomenon.

SOVETSKAYA KULTURA of 28 October reported on the results of a conference in Petrozavodsk of about 100 Soviet scientists representing the "various branches of science and technology." The main topic of discussion was the multitude of claims of recent UFO sightings in the USSR. According to SOVETSKAYA KULTURA, more questions about UFOs were raised at this conference than were answered.

LITERATURNAYA GAZETA of 1 November reported that Voronezh, where some observers had claimed to have witnessed the landing and take-off of a UFO, has become the place for a "pilgrimage" by correspondents seeking sensational news for their newspapers, regardless of the controversial nature of the so-called "weighty evidence" being presented as proof that extraterrestrials had visited Voronezh.